

Intelligence: Examination Of Its Growth

ROOM 39: A Study in Naval Intelligence. By Donald McLachlan. Atheneum. 426 pages. \$7.50.

"Simply defined, intelligence is no more than information about events or people. Give the word a capital letter and it stands for a vast area of state activity, both in peace and in war." The author, a prominent London journalist who served in British naval intelligence throughout World War II, obviously knows whereof he speaks, and, happily, his language is readable.

Better still, he demonstrates that what might seem to be a monograph on a rather restricted aspect of that war cannot in fact become otherwise than a seminal treatment touching on developments in the British intelligence services as a group. This is not only because the Royal Navy is the senior service but also because its representatives—whether a cruiser commander in the Indian Ocean, an attache in Spain, or a civilian in Reserve uniform (such as novelist Ian Fleming) back at Room 39 of the Admiralty—were those of His Majesty's servants most variously confronting the enemy over a global sweep of ports and oceans.

One of the virtues of this largish book, therefore, is its examination of the gradual growth of its subject from well before World War I. Another is its emphasis on the growing pains. These were many and high-level.

This volume has no bibliography, no illustrations, and but one chart. It has three indexes, all of which are poor. Several references to the annotation are completely missing. But the volume is also well written, comprehensive, and based on multi-language interviews. In sum, it should be of positive value to the Washington "intelligence community" as a whole, for they should find it a more than worthy successor to Sir William James' treatment of the same subject during World War I, "The Code Breakers of Room 40" (1936).

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